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Research Memorandum

RSB-155, September 14, 1962

TO : The Secretary
 THROUGH : S/S
 FROM : DIR. - Roger Hillsman *RHS*

SUBJECT: Soviet Public Statements with Respect to Cuban Security

The following report consists of an analytical summary of the principal and most authoritative Soviet statements promising military support of the Castro regime, and a selection of quotations from these statements. The quotations, when detached from the summary, are unclassified.

SUMMARY

The Soviets have been circumspect in public statements that would commit them to a specific response in support of Cuba should the latter be attacked.

At the same time, the Soviet commitment to ensure the security of the Castro regime has increased. This heightened Soviet commitment has resulted from two significant developments this year.

First, Moscow's acceptance last April of Castro's forceful assertion on March 26 of his personal leadership of a communist regime in Cuba, though reluctant, was tantamount to acknowledgment of that regime as a bona fide if junior member of the international communist family. The Soviet obligation to sustain the Cuban regime increased accordingly.

The second development increasing Moscow's commitment to ensure the security of the Cuban regime has been the recent Soviet military arms assistance to Cuba, beginning in late July, followed by the Soviet-Cuban September 2 communique publicly acknowledging the military assistance, and the September 11 Soviet Government statement accusing the US of aggressive designs on Cuba and renewing general promises of Soviet support for the latter.

One of the strongest statements of Soviet support of Cuban security was Khrushchev's July 1960 threat, "figuratively speaking," of missile retaliation if Cuba were attacked, but this statement was soon further qualified as a "symbolic" one. Khrushchev's April 18, 1961, letter to President Kennedy also contained a strong promise of Soviet assistance to Cuba in repelling armed attack; but it made no specific reference to the armed attack then in progress but quite clearly already a failure.

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Khrushchev implied in September 1961 that the Soviet Union could hold as hostages for Cuba the countries on the Soviet periphery with which the US has military alliances and in which the US has bases; and this implied threat was repeated in the Soviet Government TASS statement of September 11, 1962.

There has never been any evidence that the Castro regime has been admitted to the Warsaw Pact, the only multilateral military alliance of the communist bloc embracing the Soviet Union and seven East European communist states. There was a report that Raul Castro requested Cuban admission to the Warsaw Pact during his visit to Moscow this July, but that the request was denied. It has also been reliably reported that sometime in early September 1962 the Cubans informed a Latin American communist party leader that Cuba had secretly concluded a bi-lateral defense pact with the USSR which was tantamount to admission of Cuba into the Warsaw Pact, and that a formal announcement of the agreement was in the offing. This appears to have been an exaggerated reference to the Soviet Government statement on Cuba that was issued September 1962. A Soviet commentary on Cuban development September 3, 1962, specifically denied that Cuba was a Warsaw Pact member. There is no further evidence that the Soviets and Cuba have concluded a bilateral military alliance; Khrushchev specifically denied in September 1961 that any such agreement existed.

In April 1961 Khrushchev denied that the Soviets had any military "base" in Cuba or intended to establish one there; and the denial that one exists was repeated in the latest Soviet pronouncements.

The recent Soviet Government statements on Cuba go beyond a prestige involvement with the Castro regime and amount to a general obligation, self-assumed, to assist in defense of that regime. The Soviet-Cuban September 2, 1962, communique publicly acknowledging Soviet arms assistance to Cuba and asserting Moscow's "right" to help Cuba ensure its security constituted the most forward position the USSR had taken in underwriting the Cuban regime's security. The ensuing TASS statement of September 11, with its invective against US designs on Cuba and bombast (however general) about Soviet support of Cuba, amounted to a heightened Soviet commitment to the Cuban regime regardless of the continued -- even conspicuous -- absence of specifically threatened Soviet countermeasures in the event Cuba were attacked. The implied threat of counteraction against US allies on the Soviet periphery is probably the salient feature of Moscow's threatened measures in reaction to an attack on Cuba.

These Soviet statements will stop short of the full-fledged commitment to defend Cuba in specific situations which is a feature of Soviet military assistance treaties with the communist bloc states.

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QUOTATIONS

Warning that Soviet rockets can protect Cuba:

Rocket Support Warning Attenuated:

SENOR FRANQUI--I should like you to get me right. It would be fine if the threats did not exist.

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MR. KHRUSHCHEV--Yes.

SENOR FRANQUI--But if this threat does exist, if this threat is carried out, it seems to me that rockets are adequately prepared for this?

MR. KHRUSHCHEV--Unquestionably. You got it right. It would be fine if there should be no aggression. And we are doing everything not to launch combat rockets because it is human life, the flourishing of life, and not the destruction of human beings that is our supreme concern. (Khrushchev October 22 interview with director of Cuban newspaper Revolucion; Soviet versions released October 29.)

Soviets Ready to Provide "Any" Assistance:

We should not forget that Cuba is not alone today, that Cuba has many friends in the world, and that among the most sincere friends of the Cuban Republic, who are ready to provide any assistance, the Soviet Union is to be found. The Soviet delegation wishes to make this statement today most clearly, most definitely.

(Soviet Representative's Statement in UNGA Committee April 15, 1961, during discussion of Cuban exiles invasion at Bay of Pigs that morning.)

Soviets Will Render All Necessary Assistance to Repel Armed Attack on Cuba:

As to the Soviet Union, there should be no misunderstanding our position: We shall render the Cuban people and their government all necessary assistance in beating back armed attack on Cuba.

(Khrushchev April 18, 1961, letter to President Kennedy concerning Bay of Pigs attack.)

Soviets Have and Seek No Military Base in Cuba:

As for the Soviet Union, we have stated on many occasions, and I am stating again, that our government does not seek any advantages or privileges in Cuba. We do not have any bases in Cuba, and we do not intend to establish any. This is well known to you, to your generals and admirals. If, despite this, they still try to frighten the people by fabrications about "Soviet bases" in Cuba, this is obviously designed for simpletons. But there are fewer and fewer such simpletons, including in the United States, I hope.

(Khrushchev's April 22, 1961, reply to President Kennedy's letter of April 18 concerning Cuban Developments and World Affairs.)

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US Cuban Policy Can Lead to World War:

As for your concern for the emigres expelled by the Cuban people, I should like to add the following: You are well aware, of course, that there are emigres in many countries who are dissatisfied with the situation and the system existing in the countries they fled from. If the abnormal practice were introduced into the relations between states of using these emigres, especially arms in hand, against the countries they fled from, it can be openly said that this would inevitably lead to conflicts and wars. Therefore, it would be well to forebear from such unreasonable actions. This is a slippery and dangerous road which can lead the world to a new global war. (Ibid.)

US Action Against Cuba Fraught with Serious Consequences:

The Government of the Soviet Union sent the Government of the United States messages in which it condemned the armed incursion and warned that it could bring terrible consequences. The aggression against Cuba has brought about an exacerbation of the international situation but we would like to look optimistically upon the further development of events in this part of the world. The peoples expect the statesmen of the United States to draw the correct conclusions and the necessary lessons from what has happened.

Cuba became a victim of aggression. However, its leaders showed not only a reasonable approach but nobility and proposed holding talks with the United States to eliminate the tension in the relations between the countries and normalize the situation in the Caribbean area--Cuba and the United States are neighbors and must live like good neighbors. Certain sober people in the United States are calling for action on the principle of "live and let live." It would be a good thing if the United States used this principle in its relations with Cuba and other countries. Such an approach would be to the mutual advantage both of Cuba and of the United States and would not damage anybody's prestige. If, however, contrary to common sense, the imperialists in the United States embark on a new open adventure against the Cuban Republic, a situation fraught with serious consequences, above all for the United States itself, will be created. In our times, the adventures of the imperialist cannot be unpunished. (Khrushchev comments on Cuba in May 6, 1961 Yerevan speech.)

Moscow Would Respond to Cuban Appeal for Assistance Despite Lack of Treaty:

We recognize Cuba as an independent nation and she has the right to establish the internal system her people may choose. If she is attacked, she may count on the help of all peace-loving nations ready to fight against aggression. We have no treaties with Cuba, but if she appeals to us for help in case of aggression against her, we will of course not leave such an appeal unanswered. (Khrushchev September 5, 1961 interview with New York Times correspondent C.L. Sulzberger.)

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USSR Could Move Against Iran, Turkey, Greece:

In international affairs it is necessary to display self-control and patience. Take Iran, for example. The United States has set up its military bases in that country with the agreement of the Shah. Americans actually hold sway in Iran's economy and in her army. Naturally enough, we do not like that because American actions in Iran are directed against our security. So what should we do? Of course we are strong and could attack Iran. It would be a simple matter because our might is incomparably greater. But if we were guided by the idea that the strong should beat the weak, it would mean the introduction of club rule in international relations instead of peaceful co-existence. Or see what is going on in Turkey. She is our neighbor, but you have stationed your bases there and threaten us from those bases. You have set up bases in Greece as well, and are threatening us and our ally Bulgaria from there. But we are displaying self-restraint and patience with regard to those countries. It would be reasonable if the United States were guided by the same principles in its relations with other countries. (Ibid)

"Well Known" Soviet Warnings Repeated:

Cuba is not alone. It has many friends, not only in Latin America but throughout the world, and the Soviet Union is among them. The Republic of Cuba, as it was clearly declared by the head of the Soviet Government, N.S. Khrushchev, can always rely on the help and support of the Soviet people. The well-known warnings of the Soviet Government to the enemies of people's Cuba remain in force today, too.
(Soviet Government statement of February 18, 1962, following OAS Punta Del Este Conference on Cuba.)

And Again:

Our government and Comrade Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev personally have made repeated statements about the firm and resolute support of the Soviet Union to the just cause of the Cuban Republic, statements to the effect that the Soviet Government's warnings addressed to the enemies of People's Cuba remain in force today too.
(Soviet Deputy Premier Koslov's June 25, 1962 speech at Cuban Embassy reception in connection with July 26 Movement festivities.)

Soviet Ambassador Promises Support:

Aleksandr Alekseyev, the new Soviet ambassador to Cuba, reiterated that the Soviet people will help the brotherly Cuban people to offset any misfortune that may overtake them. "The Soviet Union will help the Cuban people under any circumstances."
(Havana Radio summary of Soviet Ambassador's remarks August 14, 1962.)

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Moscow Asserts "Right" to Help Insure Cuban Security:

During the stay of Comrades Guevara and Aragones, views were also exchanged in connection with the threats of aggressive imperialist quarters against Cuba. In view of these threats, the Cuban Government asked the Soviet Government to help it by delivering armaments and sending technical specialists to train Cuban servicemen. The Soviet Government attentively considered this request of the Cuban Government, and agreement was reached on this question. As long as the above-mentioned quarters continue to threaten Cuba, the Cuban Republic has every justification for taking the measures necessary to insure its security and safeguard its sovereignty and independence, while all Cuba's true friends have every right to respond to this legitimate request.
(Soviet-Cuban Communiqué September 2, 1962.)

Cuba Not a Warsaw Pact Member: No Soviet Base in Cuba:

It is necessary to recall that Cuba does not belong to the Warsaw Pact organization and not a single Soviet military base exists on its territory. (Moscow Radio September 3, 1962 commentary on Soviet economic and military assistance to Cuba.)

US Invasion of Cuba can Result in International Conflict:

The U.S. imperialist policy toward Cuba represents a dangerous sign against peace. A U.S. attempt to invade Cuba with its armed forces can result in an international conflict.
(Ibid.)

Soviet Military Presence Minimized:

We are not hiding from the world the fact that we are really supplying Cuba with industrial equipment and goods which are helping to strengthen its economy and raise the well-being of the Cuban people.

At the request of the Cuban Government, we are also sending Soviet agronomists, machine operators, tractor drivers, and livestock experts to share their experience and knowledge with their Cuban friends in order to help them raise the country's economy. We are also sending rank-and-file state and collective farm workers and accepting thousands of Cubans in the Soviet Union to exchange experience and teach them the more progressive methods of agriculture, to help them master the Soviet farm machinery which is being supplied them.

It will be recalled that a certain amount of armaments is also being shipped from the Soviet Union to Cuba at the request of the Cuban Government

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in connection with the threats by aggressive imperialist circles. The Cuban statesmen also requested the Soviet Government to send Soviet military specialists and technicians who would train the Cubans in handling up-to-date weapons, because up-to-date weapons now call for high skill and such knowledge. It is only natural that Cuba does not yet have such specialists. That is why we considered this request. It must be said, however, that the number of Soviet military specialists sent to Cuba can in no way be compared to the number of agricultural workers being sent there.

The armaments and military equipment sent to Cuba are designed exclusively for defensive purposes, and the U.S. President and military, just as the military of any country, know what means of defense are. How can these means threaten the United States.

(Soviet Government TASS Statement of September 11, 1962)

Possibility of Soviet Rocket Support for Cuba:

The Soviet Government has also authorized TASS to state that there is no need for the Soviet Union to shift its weapons for the repulsion of aggression, for a retaliatory blow, to any other country-- like Cuba. Our nuclear weapons are so powerful in their explosive force, and the Soviet Union has such powerful rockets to carry these nuclear warheads, that there is no need to search for sites for them beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union.

We have said and we repeat that if war is unleashed, if the aggressor makes an attack on one state or another, and this state asks for assistance, the Soviet Union can render assistance to any peace-loving state--and not only to Cuba--from its own territory. And let no one doubt that the Soviet Union will render such assistance just as it was ready in 1956 to render military assistance to Egypt at the time of the Anglo-French-Israeli aggression in the Suez Canal region.

(Ibid.)

Attack on Cuba Would Not Go Unpunished, Would Mean War:

At a moment when the United States is taking measures to mobilize its armed forces and preparing for aggression against Cuba and other peace-loving states, the Soviet Government would like to draw attention to the fact that one cannot attack Cuba and expect that the aggressor will be free from punishment. If this attack is made, it will be the beginning of the unleashing of war.

(Ibid.)

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USSR in Cuba Compared with US Position on Soviet Periphery:

The whole world knows that the United States has ringed the Soviet Union and other the socialist countries with bases. What have they stationed there--tractors? Are they perhaps growing rice, wheat, potatoes, or some other farm crops there? No, they have brought armaments there in their ships, and these armaments, stationed along the frontiers of the Soviet Union--in Turkey, Iran, Greece, Italy, Britain, Holland, Pakistan, and other countries belonging to the military blocs of Nato, Cento, and Seato--are said to be there lawfully, by right. They consider this their right. But to others the United States does not permit this right even for defense, and when measures are nevertheless taken to strengthen the defenses of this or that country the United States raises an outcry and declares that an attack, if you please, is being prepared against them. What conceit. The United States apparently believes that under present conditions one can proceed to aggression with impunity. Equal rights and equal opportunities must be recognized for all countries of the world. (Ibid.)

Threat of Retaliation Against US Allies:

A vile campaign against the Soviet Union is now being conducted in the United States. It is shouted from the housetops that since a merchant fleet is plying between the USSR and Cuba, carrying freight, this gives the United States the right to attack Cuba and the Soviet Union. But what purpose is served by the presence of U.S. warships in Turkish ports, and by what right is their stay there regarded as lawful and normal? What do they want--to obtain for themselves some exclusion from the general rules? What is declared a violation of standards for one is regarded as normal for others...

A war now would be a hundredfold more terrible, and it would bring calamities both to the people against whom the United States is now preparing aggression and to the people of the United States itself--and probably greater rather than lesser calamities at that. This will be even more true of those states, allies of the United States, which border on the Soviet Union, and also of its other allies in Europe and Asia. (Ibid.)

Soviet Combat Preparedness Measures Ordered:

The Soviet Government will not follow the way of the United States, which is calling up 150,000 reservists. If we imitated this U.S. action, we would do what apparently is wanted by certain American circles: we would help them inflame the situation. But neither can we disregard the aggressive preparations of the United States. The Soviet Government

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considers it its duty in this situation to display vigilance and to instruct the Minister of Defense of the Soviet Union and the command of the Soviet Army to take all measures to raise our armed forces to peak military preparedness. But these are exclusively precautionary measures. We shall do everything on our part so that peace is not disturbed.
(Ibid.)

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